

Save The Date....

Public Open House SR 509/SOUTH ACCESS ROAD

January 10, 2001

4:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Tyee High School Cafetorium
4424 S. 188th Street, SeaTac

The open house site is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Individuals requiring information prepared in alternative formats should call collect (360) 664-9009 or 1-800-486-8392 (TTY or relay service).



SR 509/South Access Road
Steering Committee
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For More Information

For more information on project location, design details, or to schedule a presentation for your community group, contact:

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Visit Website at:
www.wsdot.wa.gov/regions/northwest/projects/sr509/509.html

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Number 8, November, 2000

Project Newsletter

SR 509/South Access Road

PROJECT UPDATE AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Introduction

Increased traffic congestion on I-5 and SR 99, and in southwest King County, has led to a search for a regional solution. These key roads carry significant volumes of vehicles, serve regional freight distribution areas, and provide access to the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Port of Seattle, and Port of Tacoma. The extension of State Route 509 (SR 509) and the enhancement of the southern access to the airport would complement and balance travel on these routes.

This newsletter will update you on the recent progress, funding status of the project, and the proposed alignment of SR 509.

The Project Team has been hard at work over the past year. The Executive Committee has selected a preliminary preferred alternative from the six under consideration, and preliminary surveying and field work have begun.

Preliminary Preferred Alternative Identified

On September 17, 1997, the Executive Committee designated SR 509/South Access Road Alternative C as their Preliminary Preferred Alternative for purposes of preparing an Environmental Impact Statement. Since then, the design of Alternative C was developed in more detail to respond to the results of a project "value analysis" study of costs and impacts as well as to minimize conflicts with regional stormwater detention ponds and airfield safety zones at the south end of the Sea-Tac International Airport runways. Within the general concept of Alternative C, two new alignments were developed: C2 and C3. Alternative C was renamed Alternative C1.

Of these three C alignments, C2 appears to offer the most advantages and least impacts. Unlike others, this alternative does not require a tunnel in the airport safety zone, has the best configuration for safe driving, and results in the least impervious surface and hence, least stormwater runoff. It avoids acquiring land from the nearby economic develop-

ment campus and has the lowest cost at \$411 million.

On November 10, 1999, the SR 509 Steering Committee reviewed the merits of all alternatives and recommended C2 as the preliminary preferred alternative. The Executive Committee subsequently adopted the recommendation. After concurrence by agencies with decision authority, Alternative C2 will be presented in the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) as the preliminarily preferred alternative.

The Preliminary Preferred Alternative C2 extension of SR 509 would:

- .. Improve freight mobility within the entire south King County area, the most heavily traveled freight corridor in the Pacific Northwest;
- .. Enhance southern access to Sea-Tac airport;
- .. Divert traffic from the heavily congested Southcenter Hill on I-5;
- .. Add auxiliary lanes on I-5 south to Federal Way (S. 272nd St.);
- .. Provide for future high-occupancy-vehicle access between south Seattle and south King County;
- .. Allow convenient access to the southern terminus of the Sound Transit Light Rail and provide a direct link from I-5 to the airport for Sound Transit's Tacoma Region Express Bus;
- .. Reduce congestion and air pollution on arterial streets in SeaTac, Burien, Des Moines, Federal Way and Normandy Park.

Under C2, the proposed six-lane, divided SR 509 would divert from its existing right-of-way north of South 200th Street, run south of Sea-Tac Airport, cross the northeast corner of Des Moines Creek Park, and join the I-5 corridor in the vicinity of South 210th Street. New lanes added to I-5 would extend south from there to S. 272nd Street. A spur providing a new southerly access to Sea-Tac Airport (called the South Access Road) would run north and connect into the airport drive system.

Other Alternatives Under Consideration

While the SR 509 committees have stated a preliminary preference for Alternative C2 based on its apparent advantages, no alternatives have been eliminated. Alternatives described in previous newsletters, public meetings, and documents could still be chosen if later study shows that one is superior to C2.

Alternatives A, B, and D have long been identified and discussed in public forums and have not changed. Two other optional alignments exist in the Alternative C corridor, Alternative C1 and Alternative C3. Descriptions and maps of these other alternatives can be viewed at the project website: www.wsdot.wa.gov/regions/northwest/projects/sr509/509.html. You also can request paper copies of these descriptions and maps from John White at the address on the back page.

Why Do Major Projects Take So Long?

This question is frequently asked. Finding the solution that operates best, impacts least, and is most cost-effective, while considering the many different opinions of the public and agencies, is a difficult process. Some parts of the process include:

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Preparation of an EIS gives the public and decision-makers information on the impacts and benefits of alternatives so that a reasoned choice can be made. An EIS is based on detailed analyses prepared by experts in a wide variety of disciplines. Some examples of draft “discipline reports” that are being prepared for the SR 509 Extension Project include Relocations, Land Use, Visual, Transportation, Water Quality, Wetlands, Fish and Wildlife, Section 4(f), Hazardous Waste, Air Quality, Noise, and Environmental Justice.

A Draft EIS circulated in 1995 examined broad corridors for SR 509. A Supplemental Draft EIS (SDEIS) is being prepared at this time to focus on specific alternatives within the previously determined corridor.

Wetlands Mitigation

WSDOT is preparing a conceptual wetland mitigation plan in accordance with federal, state and local regulations. While the process is lengthy, it will facilitate early direction and commitments on potential wetland mitigation sites.

Public Park Impacts

Public parks are protected from impact by transportation projects under what is called “Section 4(f)” of the

Transportation Act (1966). Only when there is no “feasible” (sound engineering practices) and “prudent” (without extraordinary cost or community disruption) alternative may a highway use park land. This has been given much study in the SR 509/South Access Road project, since alternatives that avoid cutting across a corner of Des Moines Creek Park have substantially higher impacts in other categories. To offset crossing a corner of Des Moines Creek Park, extension of the existing pedestrian/bike trail northward to where it could ultimately connect with the regional system is being considered.

Relocations

The purchase of residences and businesses in a proposed right-of-way is a sensitive and time-consuming process. We carefully consider every decision that may result in the need to relocate a family or business. So far, only a preliminary determination has been made as to which properties and structures are within the preferred right-of-way. We are currently working on ways to minimize the number of residences and businesses that must be relocated due to the SR 509 project. At the same time, we must evaluate all changes that are made to assure that the roadway design is safe and effective and environmentally sensitive. After the minimization work and the EIS are complete, property appraisals,

negotiations and relocations can begin.

Coordination with Other Projects

Due to the density of existing development and plans for other public projects, WSDOT and the Steering Committee are carefully coordinating plans for SR 509 with other new developments in the area to help assure compatibility. Some of the major projects requiring this coordination include:

- The proposed extension of 228th Street by the City of Kent,
- The improvement of the SR 516 interchange with I-5,
- Development of stormwater ponds envisioned by the Des Moines Creek Basin Plan,
- Extension of the City of SeaTac’s 28th/24th Avenue,
- Development of Sea-Tac Airport, and
- Sound Transit’s LINK Light Rail.

Other activities also require attention. Examples of this include designation of a new park near I-5 by the City of Des Moines, the new Pacific Ridge neighborhood improvement project, changes in traffic circulation at Sea-Tac Airport, and long-term improvements to I-5. New regulatory requirements are also sometimes imposed including the listing of certain salmon species under the Endangered Species Act and the Environmental Justice Executive Order.



Preliminary Design Strategy

WSDOT has begun working on the preliminary roadway design concepts and right of way plans. During this process, WSDOT and consultant engineers seek ways to minimize impacts to properties, parks and the environment by making minor adjustments where possible. These adjustments are independent of the preliminary preferred alternative in the Draft EIS, and will not affect the outcome of the EIS Record of Decision. Instead, these adjustments provide an opportunity to expedite right of way acquisition and relocations after the preferred alternative is formally selected.

Field Investigations

Preliminary investigative work has begun in support of the design effort to determine the footprint of alternative impacts. A WSDOT survey crew has been conducting a topographic survey since July. The majority of their work should be completed in December.

A WSDOT drilling crew will begin work in November. They will be gathering preliminary soils information useful for deciding what type of retaining walls, bridges and tunnels would be most cost-effective. Over the winter, another crew will begin the job of locating and mapping underground utilities. This information will enable WSDOT to plan the relocation of utilities prior to future roadway construction.

Funding Status

Funding from this project has come from the City of SeaTac, City of Des Moines, King County, Port of Seattle, State of Washington, and the Federal Highway Administration. Currently, \$17 million is committed for environmental and design work as well as the completion of the contract plans for the first construction phases. The State Legislature committed \$6.5 million for the 2001-2003 biennium and \$6 million tentatively for the 2003-2005 biennium. This brings the entire funding for the project to \$29.5 million dollars. The construction of the SR 509 project and the majority of right-of-way purchases are not funded at this time.

Future Project Milestones

- Open House - January 10, 2001, Tyee High School, SeaTac
- Draft EIS release date - June 2001
- Public Hearing(s) - July 2001
- Final EIS available to the public - Late 2001
- Selection of an alternative for implementation - Early 2002
- Acquisition of right-of-way - Fall 2002
- Begin construction of first phase - Spring 2004